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THE
Annual Address
OF THE
PRESIDENT
OF THE
Natural History Society
OF NEW BRUNSWICK.

GEO. U. HAY.

Read at the 36th Annual Meeting of the
Society, January 18th, 1898.

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

OF THE

Natural History Society of New Brunswick.

A year ago in this room we took stock and concluded that, as we were rapidly outgrowing our present limited quarters, we ought to move into a spacious and commodious building provided solely for our use by some benefactor or benefactors. But though we have waited patiently for a year the benefactors have not yet appeared on the scene. There is only a modest nucleus of a building fund subscribed by one of our members, and waiting in the bank for accretions.

Few persons realize how much such a local organization as ours, supported largely by private means and personal enthusiasm, is doing for the cause of science. In a commercial city, where comparatively few are interested in the objects of our society, its growth must necessarily be slow, if not toilsome. I read a little while ago with a feeling akin to envy, I must confess, the following in regard to an institution similar to our own, established thirty years ago at Davenport, Iowa, which city has a population not much more than half that of St. John, and this population is described as "commercial and unsympathetic." The historian of that society, on the approach of its thirtieth anniversary, has this record to make:

"From a membership of four meeting in an office, it (the society) has grown to one of scores, meeting in its own home; it has a neat building free of debt; it pays a curator a regular, if small salary; it has something toward a permanent fund; with six creditable volumes of Proceedings; it has a permanent invested fund of ten thousand dollars to perpetuate their publication; it owns a valuable museum, which is open free to the public, and acts as a constant incentive to develop scientific interest. And all this has been done by a society in a small town in the west,

without the assistance of any particularly wealthy patrons."

What an ideal position for a Natural History society to occupy! To be "in its own home" with a "permanent endowment" are conditions which appeal to our own longings and which we, too, would like to see realized.

Without instituting too close a comparison between our society and the Davenport, I may refer to some features that are alike. We are a little older than they, yet in the early days of our history a few choice scientific spirits met in offices and the homes of its members. Now we also number our members by scores. Dating from the present month we pay an assistant curator "a regular, if small, salary." We have a "valuable museum," which has been free to the public on occasions, but which this year will be kept open three afternoons in the week and which we hope will act "as a constant incentive to develop scientific interest." We have at least three modest "volumes of proceedings," made up from our yearly bulletins, which we have issued for the past sixteen years, and these reports serve to keep us in touch with the scientific world without, and present a record of work and original investigation from year to year, of which we have no cause to be ashamed.

But in the matter of a "home" and an "endowment" the Davenport society is in circumstances that we may term decidedly comfortable; and yet it is located in a city of only 26,000 inhabitants, while ours numbers 40,000; their town is commercial; so is ours, but ours has great aspirations with increasing facilities in the direction of commerce. We cannot say that our citizens are without sympathy in the aims and purposes of our society, for in many ways and at all times they have given to it substantial aid. We have additions to our membership every year of persons more or

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less interested in our work. Our associate members a few weeks ago decided to double their membership in order to raise funds to keep the rooms open for three afternoons each week during the year. Their energetic action in this matter is worthy of all praise. We look back with feelings of the liveliest satisfaction to what the ladies have accomplished since they began to interest themselves actively in the society's work, and we look forward with hope to what they may accomplish in the future.

In this connection I would like to refer again to the Davenport society. I find there this suggestive record:

"The election of a school boy to membership in a scientific society might seem to mean little, but to the Davenport academy it meant much. One of the charter members of the academy, Prof. Pratt, was writing teacher in the public schools, giving instruction from building to building. At times he told the scholars to write anything they might have in mind on slips of paper and to hand them in to him. On one such occasion a boy not fourteen years of age wrote the words 'Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences.' On inquiry, Prof. Pratt found that the boy had read of the academy in the newspapers, and wanted to know what it was. When told of the meetings and collecting excursions he desired to become a member, but only if his mother could become one also. The question of lady members had not before been raised, but now posed it was soon solved. J. Duncan Putnam and his mother were elected to membership June 2, 1869. The ardent enthusiasm of the school boy and the mother's love were to do more for the academy than the few members voting at that meeting could realize. It was this mother's interest that led to the second rented room, to the donation by ladies in 1875 of new cases and carpets, to the gift by a woman in 1877 of the lot, and to much of the energy and interest displayed by the townspeople since. It was the boy's enthusiasm and the mother's love that led to the publication. Impelled by Dr. Parry's words and his own feeling of its importance, J. Duncan Putnam on November 26, 1875, then a boy of nine-

teen, urged the academy to publish Proceedings. A committee was appointed to look into the matter, and to devise means if possible to carry out the plan. Dec. 20th a company of ladies—the Women's Centennial association—agreed to see that the first volume of Proceedings, covering the years 1867-75, should be printed. It was no easy task. Entertainments were given and other ways of raising money devised. A fire interfered seriously, but at last the handsome octavo volume was printed and turned over to the academy. The volume formed part of the display of women's work and achievement at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia in 1876. The happy result of publication on the academy was immediately apparent. The Proceedings were sent to all parts of the world, and the library of the academy has grown almost entirely out of its exchange. The publication has not only benefited the scientific world by making known valuable original work, but it has made the academy widely known. The Proceedings have been continued up to the present time, and volume vii. is now in progress. * * * Mrs. Putnam's great desire since her son's death has been to see the publications continued. Her energy has never flagged, and finally she has seen the future of the Proceedings assured."

I have quoted this extract in full, not only on account of its suggestiveness, but also because to some extent our own society has aimed to carry out plans and purposes which the Davenport academy has pushed forward to completion with energy and dash that is characteristic of the west. The Davenport society has aimed to get the public schools interested in natural science, not only by its members giving lectures before teachers and scholars, but by having classes come to the museum to be instructed by the curator and other members. Our efforts have been in the same direction. To our regular and elementary lectures there has been for many years a good attendance of teachers and occasionally of pupils, and classes have been brought to the museum for instruction. We should now be able to do more in this direction than ever. If we can stimu-

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late and interest in natural science the students of our schools who have a scientific bent we shall find out and encourage our future workers in science. It was such seed that fell into young Putnam's mind that brought such an abundant harvest. From a talk about the society he was led to visit the rooms and join in the collecting trips. He became interested in entomology. He gathered a collection of 25,000 specimens, representing over 8,000 species, and containing many new to science. He is almost the sole authority on one family of insects, and though but 25 years of age at his death, and always weak in body, he had accomplished in his short but busy and useful life what few stronger men are able to accomplish in long years. He was accustomed to say: "If others are unwilling to do what ought to be done, I must." In this instance of a busy and well directed life there is surely an incentive as well as duty in a society such as yours to seek to interest the young in the work to be done around them, which ought to be done and which others are unwilling or unable to do—work that requires youthful enthusiasm and a love for investigation. There are few perhaps who have a Putnam's genius for investigation, but there are many young people in every community who could do excellent original work under proper direction. There is a place for these young persons in our society, and for their parents as well. We want the aid of hundreds of pairs of sharp intelligent eyes to assist in revealing the secrets of nature around us, to explore the woods, the streams, the shores, and make them yield the treasures of plant and animal life with which they are abounding, and of which we know so little. We want others to explore with hammer and chisel the rocks in and about our city, and make them yield new chapters in that wonderful geological history that our geologists have begun, but which they cannot complete. It is such work as theirs that is an inspiration to the young—and it will inspire them if we seek to give direction to their youthful activities, not only by instruction in these rooms, but by leading them afield and helping to give

a practical turn to their inquiries.

We have pleasant recollections of our outing at St. Martins the past summer, when under the leadership of Dr. Matthew, Dr. Ganong, Prof. Duff and others, an impetus was given to the study of natural science, which we hope will lead to the organization soon of a branch natural history society there. There is a fine opportunity for some excellent work to be done in the rugged and interesting country that surrounds the beautiful village, and there is some good material, especially among the young people, to make an active society.

The Sussex Natural History Society, formed a few months ago, had its origin in a plan to gather in a central place in the county a museum of its natural history products. Its members, now numbering over 30, are preparing themselves in their winter meetings to do some practical work in the spring. The society has its headquarters in the Sussex Grammar School, many of whose students come from a distance. All seem to be in earnest to carry out the purposes of the society.

The natural history societies of Frederickton and Chatham have been longer in existence, have already a good membership, and include members who possess special knowledge, and have attained distinction in their chosen subjects.

There seems a bright outlook for them for the special work which our own society and kindred ones in this province are seeking to do. But we must keep in view a few guiding principles, or there will be confusion and ineffective work. Those who are leaders must be the instructors, guides and counsellors of the younger members, and unselfishly give their efforts to add to the knowledge and inspire enthusiasm in the younger and inexperienced members. The special object of each society should be to study and make collections of the natural history of its own immediate neighborhood. To do this requires knowledge, experience, perseverance. There should be interest enough on the part of the general public in these centres in which societies are already or are about to be established, to provide rooms where the collections may

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be preserved, and there should be a liberality sufficient to publish in some permanent form that which is original and which possesses scientific value in their researches.

And I will now consider the particular needs of our own society, with a few suggestions:

(1) We need to enlarge and complete our local collections in every possible way. To do that we must have more workers. The example of one of our members, who has taken up the study of entomology recently, and has presented to the society a fine collection of insects obtained in the city and vicinity, is worthy of imitation. We should have a more complete collection of the fishes that are found in our rivers and bays, and in nearly all the departments of our museum, excellent as it is in many respects, we need additions.

(2) We need a closer union and co-operation among scientific workers throughout the province. We should try to meet once a year, at least, with as many of these workers as possible for mutual stimulation and encouragement. If we could extend the idea of our summer camp so as to include the members of other societies, and meet in chosen places from year to year, there is no doubt that it would increase the influence of each society, and be a great help to its membership.

(3) We want a home. We would be content with a modest building in some central locality. It need not be large, but should be carefully planned to allow of a symmetrical extension in the future, when our needs and our benefactions shall both be greater. To provide the nucleus for this building fund, I think we should take the bequest of our late president, Dr. Botsford, and devote it sacredly to this purpose. When others see that we are in earnest about this matter they will come to our assistance, and we will have what we should have had long ago—a suitable building. To meet running expenses we should devote our membership fees, and these only, to that object. If they are not adequate, we ought to increase our ordinary membership, as the ladies have just done the associate membership. Our grant from government is barely

sufficient to pay the small expense of publishing our bulletin. Our annual bulletin should be larger and include some of what has to be published in other ways, such as leaflets made up from papers published in the press. A great deal of the work done by our members is published in the proceedings of the Royal Society, where it appeals to a larger circle of readers. But there must always be a great deal published that is of a purely local character, and our bulletin at present is not sufficient to give this to the public in a permanent form. An addition to our government grant is required to increase the value of our publication.

(4) We need a permanent endowment, apart from our building fund, that would provide means to make our museum and collections more available than they are at present for the use of science and the public and educational needs. Our museum requires the services of a trained scientist, one who knows how to put in proper shape and apply its treasures so that they will be of value both for training and experiment.

If we had \$15,000 in addition to the Botsford bequest, we could put up a building that would do for many years and be a secure repository for our valuable collections. If we had an endowment of \$25,000, it would probably secure for our society the services of a well qualified curator.

Some one may say: What is the use of talking of \$40,000 for the Natural History Society? We have been talking of a building for years and nothing has come of it. Yes, but the citizens of Davenport—"commercial and unsympathetic"—did far more than this, and where it has been done it can be done again, especially under some circumstances more favorable than in that western city. An endowment of \$25,000 from many monied men in this city would scarcely be felt by them, and would be such a stimulus to science here that others would subscribe the money needful for a building. Well, let us have faith that it will be done, and be done soon. I doubt not but that there were some citizens of Davenport who shook their heads and said "impossible"—but it was done.

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